

CHAPTER XII

THE FINDS ON THE SLOPES OF POGGIO CASTELLUCCIO ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE “D”: SITES D/1 - D/2 – D/3 and D/4)

- 1 - Description of the paving remains (sites D/1 - D/2 and D/3).
- 2 - The excavation by the Archaeological Superintendency for Tuscany to investigate the stratigraphy of the road construction (site D/4).
- 3 - The opinions and inspections by Giancarlo Susini and Raymond Chevallier.

1 - Description of the paving remains (sites D/1 - D/2 and D/3)

From mount Poggiaccio, the ridge descends continuously as far the Futa pass and through the Mugello valley.

The summit of Poggio Castelluccio is one kilometre south of mount Poggiaccio and three kilometres north of the Futa pass; it reaches an altitude of 1,131 metres above sea level (65 metres less than Poggiaccio). Like on mount Bastione and Poggiaccio, the transapennine route follows a constant course avoiding the peak of Poggio Castelluccio, which is 25-30 metres higher than the average altitude of the ridge. The peak is about 90-100 metres further west compared to the straight-line of the route, and by continuing along a direct course, ancient voyagers avoided it by passing below the peak on the eastern versant. The medieval mule track also adopted this route and we exploited its obvious traces to unearth the well-preserved remains of the adjacent Roman road.

SITE D/1

Without a doubt, the discovery of the paved stretches on the slopes of Poggiaccio proved the continuity of the road on the Tuscan orographic slopes. Thanks to our previous excavations, we had acquired a certain amount of experience and our trained eyes were now accustomed to perceiving surfaces clues indicating there was paving below.

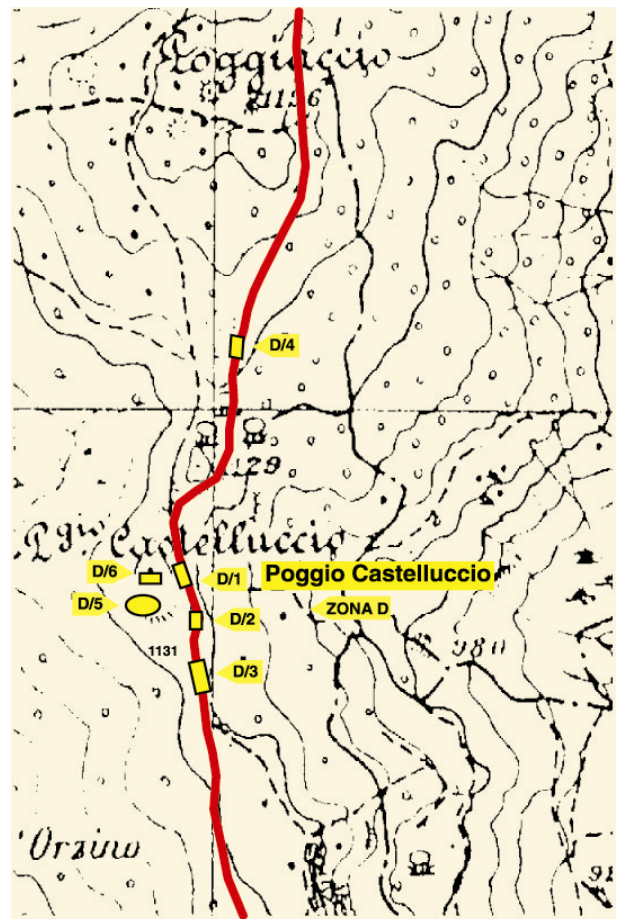


Plate 23

- Archaeological site D: finds in Poggio Castelluccio.
- Sites D/1, D/2 and D/3: paving stones.
- Site D/4: cross-section of road.
- Site D/5: castellar.
- Site D/6: remains of a building.
- The route of the Roman road.

(Italian Military Geographic Institution (I.G.M.) authorisation No. 5034 dated 13.07.99)



Poggio Castelluccio (site D/1- south): Cesare Agostini and Franco Santi at work: The slope of this stretch has not encouraged the usual considerable sedimentation that covers the paving; therefore, it was straightforward to reveal.

Poggio Castelluccio (site D/1): the straight line of paving stands out in the wood, which has covered and protected it for centuries after it fell into disuse.



This experience eased our exploration of the upper slopes of Poggio Castelluccio, rewarded by the discovery of about fifteen metres of paving, which was well preserved over its entire width. Only a few metres of the downhill edge had disappeared due to soil subsidence caused by the adjacent passage of the mule track. This stretch is on the western versant of the ridge and is on a slight rise near a small hump, which in this point is perpendicular to the axis of the route.

SITE D/2

The map illustrates a Roman route (red line) and a mule-track (green line) starting from Poggio Castelluccio (m 1131) and heading towards the sea. Key features include:

- Poggio Castelluccio m 1131:** The starting point, marked with a triangle.
- Castelliere E:** An oval-shaped archaeological site located near Poggio Castelluccio, with a distance of m 50 indicated.
- Archaeological site D:** A series of sites along the route, marked with yellow rectangles:
 - SITO D/6:** Building remains, located near Castelliere E.
 - SITO D/5:** Castellare, located near Castelliere E.
 - SITO D/1:** Paving stones, located near the start of the route.
 - SITO D/2:** Paving stones, located further along the route.
 - SITO D/3:** Paving stones, located near the end of the route.
- Distances:** Various distances are marked along the route, including m 50, m 32, m 16, m 20, m 3, m 9, m 8,5, m 1, m 6, m 10, m 5, and m 1,7.
- Connecting footpath:** A green line connecting Castelliere E to the main route.
- Legend:**
 - Red line: Roman route.
 - Green line: Mule-track.
 - Yellow rectangle: Archaeological site D: Poggio Castelluccio.

Plate 24

- Roman route.
- Mule-track.
- Archaeological site D: Poggio Castelluccio.
 - Sites D/1, D/2 and D/3: paving stones.
 - Site D/5: castellar.
 - Site D/6: remains of a building.

Poggio Castelluccio (site D/2): *small and intermittent excavations over the entire width of the carriageway highlighted the perfect straight line of the road.*

SITE D/3

A few tens of metres below site D/2, the beech wood opens onto a small flat clearing covered by lush ferns. Its ideal alignment with the already uncovered paving inspired us to dig right below the ferns. As soon as we started the excavation, we realised that we were in a clearing used by woodcutters in the past as somewhere to pile wood before it was converted into charcoal. The ground was blackened by the charcoal residues. We were familiar with these very frequent clearings. Our grandparents had told us that many of their fellow villagers still carried out this type of work up to the 1930's – 1940's² and they had told us about the toil this occupation involved. They had also told us that the *carbonai* [charcoal burners] always used the same clearings as their forefathers in antiquity. Although these types of jobs had ceased to exist by the mid twentieth century, they probably dated back to centuries ago, and we hoped to find road paving below the charcoal burners' floor. It would have been yet more proof of the age of the road; the charcoal burners could not have used the road surface as a work floor³ if the road was still used by transapennine traffic.

At a depth of 60 cm, our excavation revealed the paving stones (site D/3): this was an important confirmation.



Poggio Castelluccio (site D/3): Franco Santi and Cesare Agostini start to dig among the ferns along the continuation of the ideal straight line of the already uncovered road, when they realise this was a clearing once used by charcoal burners.



Le Banditacce ("Il Passeggere" Farm- 11 August 1999). Setting up a charcoal burner – phase one: the wood was arranged on two levels forming a cone shape. An aperture was left in the centre to act as a chimney. It was then carefully covered with pieces of turf. (Photograph by Leandro Gualtieri).

Le Banditacce ("Il Passeggere" Farm- August 1999). Phase two: the charcoal burner after it has been lit. Burning brands are thrown through the chimney from above and set the mass of wood alight. The wood must burn slowly for 5-6 days in an almost airless environment where it is transformed into charcoal

² Stefano Casini: work cited, page 15: "*The trees in these solitary woods, are now farmed by fixed rotation and produce from 13 to 14 thousand tons of charcoal*". The author points out that this data refers to the Municipality of Firenzuola in the year 1914 over 7,257 hectares of woodland.

³ It is well known that to produce charcoal it is necessary to build a wooden cone using a special technique. The cone is then covered with pieces of turf and a fire is lit through a circular access point left open at the top. The wood must burn without producing any flames for about one week. This would not have been possible on a road still being used by traffic. We would like to thank Leandro Gualtieri, owner of "Il Passeggere" farm in Bruscoli (Municipality of Firenzuola) who in August 1999, had an excellent idea and set up an authentic charcoal burner, inviting everyone to a festival where they could see for themselves how charcoal was once made.





Poggio Castelluccio (site D/3): at the end of the excavation, the paving re-emerges in all its glory. Note the 60 cm layer of sedimentation covered for centuries by the charcoal burners' clearing.



Poggio Castelluccio (site D/3): a glimpse of the still well aligned paving stones that constitute the downhill edge of the road.

The stratification of the sedimentation above was clearly different and on two levels. An upper level measuring about 30-35 cm consisted in black earth mixed with charcoal. The lower level measured about 15-20 cm and was similar to yellowish lime. This diverse stratification proved that at first, after prolonged disuse, the paving was gradually covered by alluvial lime⁴ that slid down from the then treeless slope above. Later the wood regained the verge created by the Romans on either side of the road, and the leaves and branches deposited on top of the lime forming a layer of humus.



Poggio Castelluccio (site D/3): *the stratification above the paving highlights two sedimentary levels with very distinct colours: the lower yellow ochre layer consists in alluvial lime. The top dark brown layer consists in humus, which formed after the centuries-old falling of leaves and branches, and later by charcoal burning.*

During a later age, an unknowing charcoal burner selected this flat area to

carry out his work. He was followed by other generations of charcoal burners who used the ready-made clearing. The age of the paving is also proved by the mule track, which makes a curve here to avoid interfering with the charcoal burners' work place. Consequently, the paving below has been well preserved. The downhill edge especially, made with wide, well hewn stones, appeared to be very skilfully made and we decided to uncover this entire stretch of road. Over the following years, with the help of willing friends⁵, sixteen metres of 2.40-metre wide road saw the light of day. However, in a spot where the ground beneath had obviously yielded, the paving has become loose and the width of the carriageway is now 2.80 metres.

We left 5-6 square metres of the above sedimentation to show where the charcoal burners' clearing was.

2 - The excavation by the Archaeological Superintendency for Tuscany to investigate the stratigraphy of the road construction (site D/4).

During the excavation campaign in the summer of 1989, under the direction of Luca Fedeli, the Archaeological Superintendency for Tuscany, carried out a test excavation, dissecting a stretch of paving between Poggiaccio and Poggio Castelluccio (site D/4).

In the descriptive account published by Fedeli⁶, the area is identified as "Excavation C" and is located in the area of Poggio Castelluccio⁷, although to be more precise, it is in the intermediate area between Poggio Castelluccio and Poggiaccio. The test dig consisted in an excavation at a right angle to the road and it aimed to highlight the different levels of the road structure.

Below are some significant passages from his account ⁸: *"In the area of test excavation "C", the paving on the road surface (stratigraphic unit 301) was partly covered by humus and at the edges consisted in*

⁴ The Romans completely cut back the vegetation growing by the roadside to ground level to avoid ambushes; especially wise in a treacherous place like this. Therefore, it is likely that the rainwater washed down the slope above, leaching the clayey soil that was unprotected by vegetation.

⁵ Our friends in Bruscoli contributed in particular: Emanuele Stefanini, Andrea Vignoli and Marco Antonelli.

⁶ In the Minutes of the Conference "La viabilità tra Bologna e Firenze nel tempo" published by Costa, pages 84-85-86.

⁷ Luca Fedeli: work cited, page 84 ... (omissis) *the stretch of road involved in the excavation chosen was a few hundred metres from the peak of Poggio (Castelluccio) along its highest north-eastern slopes...*

⁸ Luca Fedeli: work cited, page 85.



Between Poggio Castelluccio and Mount Poggiaccio (site D/4-August 1989): members of the Archaeological Cooperative in Florence, under the direction of Luca Fedeli, carrying out a survey of the surface of the paving before starting the excavation to reveal the road section.

sandstone blocks with an irregular quadrangular-trapezoid shape, well-made and different from the rest of the paving stones due to their larger size”.

Continuing with his description of the stratigraphy, Fedeli points out: “Below stratigraphy unit 301 (the paving), a sandy levelling bed (stratigraphy unit 303) appeared, on top of which the paving stones were laid”. Fedeli found a carbon fragment above the sandy bed, which was analysed in Zurich⁹, and dates back to more or less 596-140 A.D. “Even further below there was another layer (stratigraphy unit 304) made up of sand and coarse medium to small stones. The stones came from local sandstone material, probably a by-product from shaping the native rock. Stratigraphy unit 304 created a bed on which to set

the paving so that it would be sufficiently stable and well-drained”¹⁰.

The same construction technique was used here as noted by us on Poggiaccio (site C/3):

- the edge paving consisted in solid quadrangular-trapezoid blocks with smaller stones in the centre;
- the stones lay on a bed of rough sandstone gravel, mixed with sandy earth measuring from 25 to 90 cm deep, offering support to the paving as well as rainwater drainage;

- the test excavation also provided some indication of the probable era in which the road was built, if nothing else as an indication of *ante quem*. In fact, Fedeli, inspired by the dating of the small carbonaceous fragment pointed out¹¹: “Nevertheless, although very scant, the presence of carbonaceous material made it possible to pinpoint a date, thus excluding some of the theories suggested so far (see for example note 9).

In note 9, he mentions the theories advanced by some enthusiastic archive researchers¹², who, on hearing about our first finds, upheld that these were the remains of a mule track built in the late Middle Ages, or even in modern times. Here, Fedeli categorically excludes that the road could have been built any later than the 5th, 8th centuries A.D.: “the layer in which this material was found (stratigraphy unit 303) is an integral part of the road surface and, therefore, it is undoubtedly a structural part of the Castelluccio paving; nevertheless, this does not mean it is possible to establish exactly when the road was built, considering how close this layer is to the road surface, and material may have been added later for various reasons (water seepage, infiltrations, local tampering with the road surface, road maintenance or repairs

⁹ Luca Fedeli: work cited, note 60, page 89: “The analysis of the sample I took of the only, very small carbonaceous fragment (from a twig) was carried out at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (E.T.H.) in Zurich - Honggerberg, of the Institut für Mittlere Energie physik” (document 9).

¹⁰ Luca Fedeli: work cited, page 86. In note 61, page 89, Fedeli points out: “The layers (stratigraphy units 303-304) placed between the paving and the native rock feature a variable thickness between 25 and 90 cm”.

¹¹ Luca Fedeli: work cited, page 86.

¹² The enthusiasts we allude to are the supporters of the theory formulated by Nereo Alfieri we have already mentioned.

of varying degree, etc.). I would also say that the archaeometric datum that fixes the date from the 5th to the 8th century A.D., could be plausibly used to establish a date ante quem the road surface was built. Therefore the road was either built during this epoch or during an earlier age”.

This *ante quem* term is very important, but not enough to establish exactly when the road was built. As we shall see, there are other clues and more proof to suggest that the road was built in the 2nd century B.C.

3 - The opinions and inspections by Giancarlo Susini and Raymond Chevallier.

If it is true that our discoveries were initially considered with scepticism by some in the academic circles of Bologna, it is also true that others expressed a positive opinion, confirming the Roman origins of this impressive thoroughfare.

Among these, was Giancarlo Susini, Professor of Ancient History at Bologna University and at the time, head of the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy, who we met during a conference at the Bologna-Centro Rotary Club on 16 February 1988.

After our talk, accompanied by the projection of numerous slides, Susini's comments and his substantial approval was a source of profound satisfaction for us ¹³: “... (ceteris omissis) ... I would like to know who would dare to criticise your considerations because, in my opinion, there is no way that anyone can doubt the value and the validity or the critical exactness of the information you have provided. There is no doubt from an archaeological point of view; (...) in some ways I am “an expert” in this area and therefore it is understandable that I may express certain opinions;

there was no need to draw so many comparisons because the information presented absolutely speaks for itself: there is not the least doubt! This is a Roman road, there is not the least doubt about its being a Roman road, there is not the least doubt that this is a Republican Roman road (...); I could go on quoting countless other data regarding the production of paving stones, etc. which further confirm the enormous amount of information you have collected and illustrated this evening. I believe the results achieved are truly a precious gift to historians and archaeologists alike.

I would also like to add something else, and then I shall move on to the third part, which is perhaps slightly non-critical and has a more general character. I realise that someone who is not actively involved or employed in this field and who is unaware of the problems of ancient history, cannot fully perceive the correctness with which you have presented your information when you place the construction of these roads within a Ligurian context; this idea is a “quid novi” for ancient history, which until now has placed the construction of these roads within an Etruscan, Etruscan-Celtic context, etc. This is incorrect! The Apennine context is also a Ligurian context, and somehow, because the Ligurians were not alphabetised or cultured, and due to the scant information that we and ancient sources have about them, we have certainly been very slow to realise this; however, there is no doubt that this is the historic picture, the frame of reference.

Having said this, just one point I do not wish to contradict and I do not wish to judge is the connection with the Via Flaminia, which remains a question mark. Why is it a question mark? I must explain this documentarily. These transapennine roads had no continuation during the Roman imperial age, or they did, but they slowly fell into diuse. You yourselves referred precisely to the start of the 4th century;

¹³ The words in italics are the exact words taken from the recording of Giancarlo Susini's comments kindly made available to us by the Chairman of the “Bologna-Centro” Rotary Club in 1988, Luigi Heilmann, formerly Professor in Historical and Comparative Linguistics at the University of Bologna.



Poggio Castelluccio (site D/3 – 24 September 1988): *Giancarlo Susini from the University of Bologna and Franco Santi on the Roman road on the slopes of Poggio Castelluccio.*

these roads fell into disuse; because they did not become consular roads, they were not maintained by the Roman Magistrates called “Curatores viarum”. And this was because when the Republic became an Empire, it was the main thoroughfares and heavy vehicle traffic that counted, therefore the Via Flaminia (the Flaminia Maior from Rome, Fano to Rimini), the Via Aemilia and the roads over the Alps. Although these minor roads were built as public highways thanks to consular initiative, exploiting the energies of armies and “ironmongers”, almost as if there were civil engineering departments, they fell into disuse. This had an unhappy consequence, and what you said at the beginning is perfectly right, they are not documented, they are not documented on ancient road maps, they are not documented in itineraries, no transapennine road has ever been documented... (ceteris omissis).

This substantial recognition that that paving certainly dated back to the Roman Republic rewarded our many toils and encouraged us to continue our research. It is true that Susini does not mention the exact date of the construction, nor does he attribute the road to C. Flaminus Nepos, but his words gave our morale a decisive boost; from that moment on, we had proof that the most authoritative exponent of the Bolognese academic world, and one of the most distinguished European scholars of Roman history appreciated the results of our research and shared our opinions, at least by 90%.

In September 1988, we welcomed Susini, accompanied by Angela Donati¹⁴ and Carlo Alvisi¹⁵ to the excavation site. He attentively visited every stretch of paving unearthed on Poggiaccio and Poggio Castelluccio, confirming that the road was built during the Roman Republic.

¹⁴ Angela Donati is Professor of Ancient Roman Epigraphy and Antiquities in the Department of Archaeology of the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy at the University of Bologna.

¹⁵ At the time, Carlo Alvisi was Professor of Neurosurgery at the University of Bologna.

Raymond Chevallier, Professor of Archaeology in the Roman World at the University of Tours (France) and chairman of the French Society of Photogrammetry expressed the same opinion during his visit on 30 September 1989 during the Conference "La viabilità tra Bologna e Firenze nel tempo"¹⁶.

Especially impressed by the straightness of the route although it crossed a mountain pass over rough and difficult ground, he told us: *"It is clear that only the Romans could have conceived the construction of such a solid, impressive and straight transapennine road"*, a concept that he later confirmed when he spoke at the Conference. A few months later, he published a report of the Conference in the French magazine, "Archeologia" (issue 252 in December 1989) where he wrote the following words: *"The participants at the congress were able to see these impressive remains nestling in very beautiful greenery"*¹⁷.

In January 1999, ten years after our last meeting with Chevallier, we sent him the photographs of the paving found south of the Futa pass and the remains of the bridge in Colombaiotto, which were still buried in 1989. His answer confirmed that he shared our opinions.



Poggio Castelluccio (site D/3 – 30 September 1989): Raymond Chevallier (left) Professor of archaeology of the Roman World at the University of Tours (France) on the site on the slopes of Poggio Castelluccio. In the centre stand Mrs. Rauty and Cesare Agostini (right).

¹⁶ The Conference "La viabilità tra Bologna e Firenze nel tempo" was held from 28 September to October 1 1989 in Firenzuola and San Benedetto Val di Sambro. The conference is discussed in more detail in the appendix.

¹⁷ See document 10.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FINDS ON THE PEAK OF POGGIO CASTELLUCCIO: A “CASTELLAR” (SITE D/5)

1 - The “castellar”: a Ligurian fort

2 - Were the tactics used by the Romans to conquer Poggio Castelluccio the same as the ones used to conquer mount Olympus?

1 - The “castellar”: a Ligurian fort

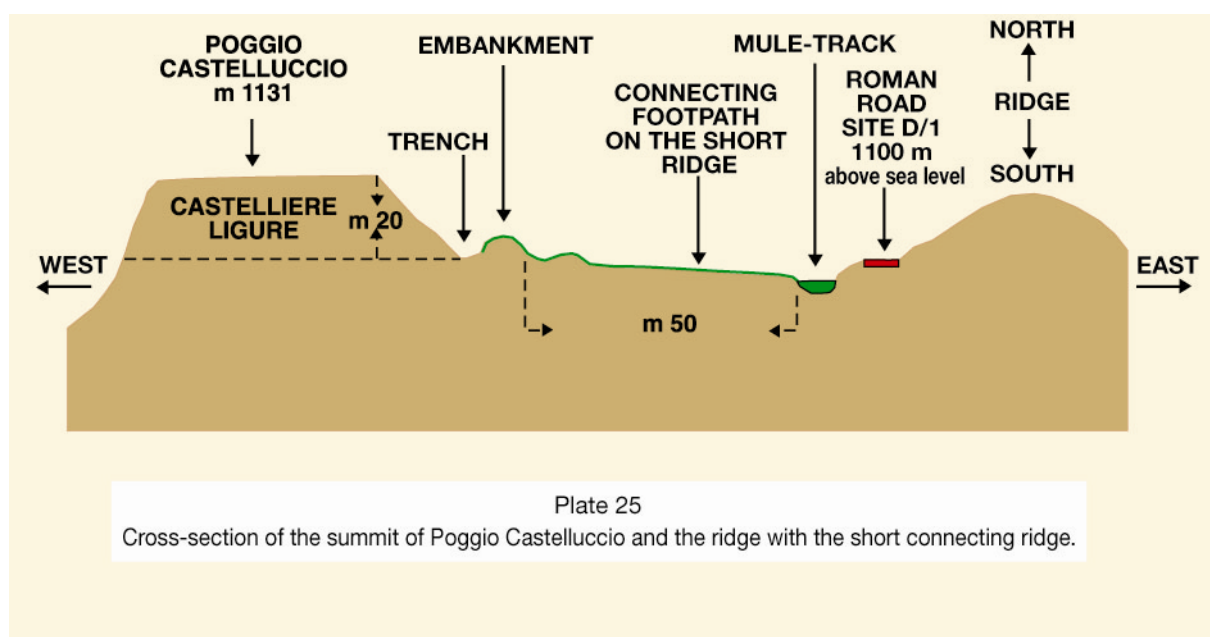
Poggio Castelluccio is three kilometres north of the Futa pass and reaches an altitude of 1,131 metres above sea level; a few metres higher up, the line of the ridge descends southwards. Its peak is about 100 metres west of the road and is linked to it by a small, slightly uphill ridge. Therefore, to reach the peak of Poggio Castelluccio, it is necessary to abandon the road and proceed along this brief ridge towards southwest. When, during the first years of the 1980's we came to this place to look for the road paving, the name of this peak reminded us of a castle, a “castellar”, or anyway a fortification. As we set off for the peak, we found ourselves in front of a deep hollow bordered by an embankment which surrounds its slopes by about 270 degrees. It was obviously a

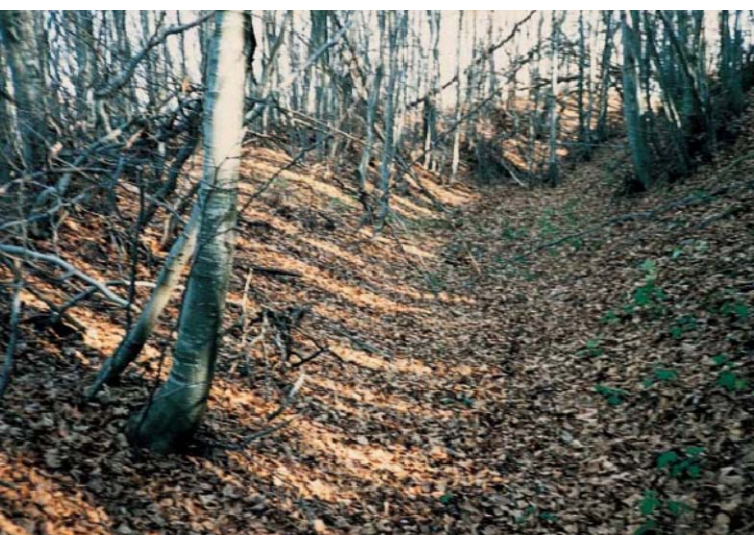
manmade defence structure.

The elliptical east-west peak has a surface area of about one thousand square metres and it is perfectly level. Suspecting that it had been levelled on purpose, we carried out a few test excavations, which at a depth of 50-60 cm, revealed numerous Apennine Ligurian ceramic fragments, made with the same clay and with the same aspect as the fragments found on Poggiaccio.

These finds, together with the morphology of the area, convinced us that this peak had a “castellar” function and it probably had the dual aim of acting as a defence fort guarding the transapennine route below.

Not satisfied with finding these significant ceramic fragments, in themselves sufficiently indicative that this peak was used in antiquity,





Poggio Castelluccio (site D/5): a view of the trench that surrounds 270 degrees of the upper slopes of Poggio Castelluccio. This defensive work and the ceramic finds on the peak confirm the function of this place as a Ligurian castellar. Considering the ditch must have been much deeper if it is still visible today in spite of the centuries old sedimentation of leaves and branches which have made their way down from the slopes.

in summer 1988, in the presence of Agostino Salomoni and Luca Fedeli, we took a sample of carbonaceous residues found at a depth of 90 cm. The analysis carried out in the C/14 laboratory of E.N.E.A. in Bologna gave the following result: 850 B.C. (give or take 50 years) ¹. This confirmed the presence of Apennine Ligurian settlements from the 9th century B.C. and it is very probable that these Apennine Ligurians continued to live on the Apennine ridge without showing any hostility towards the Etruscans², until the arrival of the Romans. This persistence of Ligurian settlements on Poggio Castelluccio, was confirmed by the excavations carried out during the following August by the Archaeological Superintendency for Tuscany. In summer 1989, following our indications, Luca Fedeli carried out a few sample digs on the peak, the results of which were published by him in the Minutes of the Conference “La viabilità tra Bologna e Firenze nel tempo”. These are some of the most



Poggio Castelluccio (site D/5): ceramic fragments made using rough clay belonging to the Apennine-Ligurian culture (8th-4th centuries B.C.) found in large numbers on the peak of Poggio Castelluccio.



Poggio Castelluccio (site D/5): other fragments of Apennine Ligurian ceramics.

significant points of his report³. “test excavation A at Poggio Castelluccio was carried out in a small clearing free of vegetation on the mountain peak, almost where the eastern slopes of Poggio slope down to the Setta valley (ceteris omissis); therefore the investigation initially unearthed a series of layers of leaching and sedimentation under the woodland humus (ceteris omissis). Two further layers were found underneath

¹ The results of this dating are indicated in the enclosed certification (document 5 - sample BO 43).

² In the excavations carried out on Poggio Castelluccio we also found (as on Poggiaccio), vase fragments made of black clay of Etruscan origin (bucchero).

³ Luca Fedeli: Minutes of the Conference “La Viabilità tra Bologna e Firenze nel tempo”, page 74.

(the second stony) both may have been waste from the presumed settlement. There were other layers below these, two probable ground floors (stratigraphy units 207 and 210), the second of which showed signs of fire in the form of scattered carbonaceous frustules and the remains of baked material”.

These carbonaceous fragments date back to 490 B.C. (more or less 90 years)⁴, confirming that the location was used during the 6th and 5th centuries B.C.; “In effect, stratigraphy units 200, 201, 203 and 205 - 210 featured ceramic material (fragmentary) which is relatively homogeneous from a chronological point of view and, as seen, attributable to a nearby settlement. (ceteris omissis). The clay used to make the ceramics consists entirely in clays commonly used in northern Etruria from at least the 9th to the 8th centuries B.C. (ceteris omissis) Comparison with products from the same age allow parallels to be drawn with Tuscany-Latium, the Po Valley and Liguria”⁵.

In note 48, on page 89 of his account, Fedeli points out the following with regard to the type of ceramics found: “A comparison can also be drawn with the types present in Liguria a few centuries later”.

And finally, in note 52 (also on page 89), he does not exclude the possibility that this type of ceramic was also used in the 4th century B.C.: “The utterly local character of the ceramics found on Poggio Castelluccio could confirm the possibility of a chronological delay compared to the usual dating of the typologies seen. The archaeometric examination of a ceramic fragment by the Department of Physics of Milan State University, (ceteris omissis) has for example fixed the dating at 566 (give or take 200 years) B.C. (8th – 4th centuries B.C.)”.

The vicinity of probable settlements just a little further north, on the slopes of mount Poggiaccio, where we found identical ceramic materials, suggests that Poggio Castelluccio and Poggiaccio were



Poggio Castelluccio (site D/5 - August 1989): members of the Florence Archaeological Cooperative excavating on the summit of Poggio Castelluccio.

linked and perhaps had two different functions in terms of defending the track. Mount Bastione was also part of this same context considering that it lay along the transapennine track. In fact, Poggio Castelluccio controlled the south versant in the same way as Bastione controlled the north versant. Inserted between these two fortified peaks, Poggiaccio must have had an intermediate function and acted as a visual link.

These archaeological discoveries made our thoughts turn to Guido Achille Mansuelli, who in 1976, thirteen years before these finds, wrote ⁶: “Even vaguer is the information about the Ligurians who bordered with the Gauls on

⁴ Luca Fedeli: work cited, note 45, page 89 “a sample I took from stratigraphy unit 210 was analysed by department T.I.B of E.N.E.A. in Bologna. The dating was fixed at 490 give or take 90 years) B.C.”

⁵ Luca Fedeli: work cited, pages 74 and 76.

⁶ Guido Achille Mansuelli: “Profilo geografico culturale dell’Emilia preromana” in “Storia dell’Emilia Romagna”, University Press, Bologna 1976, page 38.

the Apennines; only the Apuani and the Friniates are mentioned because according to sources, they led a primitive lifestyle. (*ceteris omissis*) The interesting hypothesis whereby the Apennine “castellars” were military defences set up against the Romans perhaps requires archaeological verification in terms of chronology and stratigraphy. However, during the Roman age, the entire Ligurian-Gaul Apennine area resisted urbanisation”.

Our finds confirm the presence of Ligurian civilisation in the areas south of Emilia and bordering with Tuscany. In fact, the Ligurians



Poggio Castelluccio (site D/5): *all the pebbles found have a length that varies from 6 to 7 cm (200-300 grams), ideal size and weight for being re-used as thrown weapons.*

still used vase-like ceramic shapes and Bronze Age tools⁷. In Poggio Castelluccio, as in Poggiaccio, we also found numerous oval-shaped pebbles used as missiles.

This entire area, with its pair of “Castellars”, abundant remains of Apennine-Ligurian ceramics and stone missiles, calls to mind the places described by Livy during the battles held in 187 B.C. by the Roman legions against the Ligurians: “*Loca montana et aspera quae et ipsis capere labor erat et ex praeoccupatis deicere hostem; ... oppugnatio necessaria munitorum castellorum laboriosa simul periculosaque*”⁸.

We have spent days and weeks in these “mountainous” and “austere” places, walking along tracks that are still “impervious” and “narrow”, carefully scrutinising the ground covered with the thick undergrowth of ferns and brambles.

We also found it difficult to reach the remains of the “well fortified positions” on foot and we understood how difficult it must have been to storm those “castellars”.

Thanks to Livy’s description, while walking through these wild woods it is possible to relive the emotions and the anxieties the Roman soldiers must have felt when approaching enemy strongholds. The fear of falling into an ambush is still a tangible sensation and gives anyone climbing upwards a sense of inferiority, not because one expects an enemy attack, but because of nature’s hostility. The terrain is as arid now as it was then, providing “*little hope of plunder*”. It was necessary to “*skimp on food because there were no camp-followers*”, and the same applies today if you climb up there without a well-stocked rucksack.

⁷ The lack of medieval ceramics suggests that neither mount Poggiaccio, nor Poggio Castelluccio were used during later ages.

⁸ Titus Livius: History of Rome, book XXXIX, paragraph 1: “*mountainous and forbidding places, positions difficult to storm if already occupied by the enemy... forced to attack with effort and risk well-fortified castellars*”.

2 - Were the tactics used by the Romans to conquer Poggio Castelluccio the same as the ones used to conquer mount Olympus?

To integrate Livy's brief account of the conquest of the Ligurian castellers, we tried to imagine the assault by Marcus Aemilius Lepidus against the Ligurian positions using Livy's description of the conquest of mount Olympus by the consul, Gnaeus Manlius Vulso, who defeated the Gaul-Greeks after they took refuge on the sacred mountain.

This occurred in 188 B.C., that is, one year before the bellicose events we are interested in. The Romans undoubtedly used the same weapons, tactics and strategy to conquer other peaks occupied by their enemies. From his account⁹ it emerges how effective it was to conquer fortified peaks with weapons such as arrows and javelins, but especially "shot"¹⁰ and stones for slings; just like those we found in abundance on mount Poggiaccio and Poggio Castelluccio.

The circumstantial description by Livy is worth quoting: *"When the Greek-Gauls¹¹ entered into battle, they believed that by occupying the highest mountains in the area and collecting sufficient supplies for an indefinite period, they would have worn down their enemy - or so they believed: the Romans would certainly never have dared to dislodge them by climbing such precipitous and steep terrain; and if they did try, just a handful of men would have been enough to block their route and disperse them; they certainly would not have set up camp and waited for the onset of cold and hunger at the foot of the mountain. Therefore, although the height of their position constituted a good defence, they ran a ditch and other defence works around the peaks they had occupied*

They paid very little thought to providing themselves with a supply of weapons to throw, convinced as they were



Poggio Castelluccio (site D/5): pebbles used as missiles by the Ligurians and the Romans. The account of the battle of mount Olympus, described by Livy (quoted in the text in this paragraph) highlights the efficacy of these weapons in clashes that took place at a distance.

that the rough ground would itself furnish them with an abundance of stones. The consul realised that there would be no hand-to-hand fighting, and that the battle would involve long range attacks which would place the enemy positions under siege; he therefore prepared a large quantity of javelins, skirmishing spears, arrows, shot, and small stones that could be launched with slings: well-armed with these missiles, he marched his men towards mount Olympus and set up camp about five miles away. (ceteris omissis) On the third day, he set off with all his cavalry on a reconnaissance mission of the area. (ceteris omissis) After taking note of every possibility, on that day he set up his camp at the foot of the mountain. The day after (ceteris omissis), he divided his army into three columns and advanced on the enemy. (ceteris omissis) The Gauls were confident that at least on two sides there was no possibility of access; to block with armed force access from the south, they sent about four thousand soldiers to seize a hillock that overlooked

⁹ Titus Livius: work cited, book XXXVIII, paragraphs 19, 20 and 21.

¹⁰ "Shot" consisted in small lead missiles produced directly by the military company. The missiles were about 6-7 cm long and they were launched by slingers during assaults. They featured various types of engravings; at times, the name of the military company which founded them (legion, cohort, etc.), other times curses addressed to the enemy commander, or inciting the shot to hit the enemy in a certain part of the body.

¹¹ These were Gauls belonging to the Tolostobogian people, descendents of the Gaulish tribes who had moved into Greek territory during the 3rd century B.C.; this is why the Romans called them the Greek-Gauls.

the access route (which was less than a mile from the camp) convinced that they would block the route just like the fortifications of a castle. When the Romans realised what they were doing, they prepared for battle. (ceteris omissis) The infantry companies advanced at a very slow pace, given the steepness of the slope; the soldiers held their shields before them with the aim of only warding off missiles and giving the impression that they wanted to avoid hand-to-hand fighting. The fight commenced while the enemies were at a distance with the hurling of missiles and, initially the fight was even because the Gauls were advantaged by their position, the Romans by the variety and quantity of their weapons; then as the fight progressed, the evenness disappeared. The Gauls were inadequately protected by their oblong shields which were too narrow for their large build and also flat. They also had no other weapons except for their swords, which were utterly useless because they were not engaged in hand-to-hand fighting. They tried throwing stones, but this was no use because they had not made any preparations earlier and they could only throw the stones that in the heat of the moment happened to come into their hands; they had no experience in this type of fighting and did not have enough skill or strength to assist the throw. They were wounded from every side by arrows, shot and javelins; and with their souls overcome by rage and terror, they no longer understood what to

do, involved in a type of conflict for which they had absolutely no aptitude”.

This episode proves that the greater number of available stones helped Gnaeus Manlius Vulso to win the battle. Can the success of M. Aemilius Lepidus against the Apuani Ligurians in Poggio Castelluccio, Poggiaccio and mount Bastione be attributed to similar circumstances? History makes no mention of it, but the stone missiles have remained, reminding us that they were used in cruel battles and perhaps contributed towards the victory of the Roman legions.

With this thought, we left Poggio Castelluccio, the castellar, trench, ceramics and the oval pebbles behind us and we continued our journey towards the Futa pass along the Roman paving unearthed beforehand.

Just a few hundred metres further south, the beech wood is replaced by a dense fir wood that was so dark we abandoned our search. We decided to be content with the paving found on Poggio Castelluccio, seeing as it was obvious that the route could only continue along the same ridge, descending towards the Futa pass.

We had reached the objective we had set ourselves after the first find on mount Bastione. Therefore, we decided it would be more useful to dedicate our time and efforts to searching for the continuation of the paving south of the Futa pass, in the Mugello valley.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MYSTERIES OF MOUNT POGGIACCIO AND POGGIO CASTELLUCCIO

- 1 - An artificial reservoir on mount Poggiaccio and an area suitable for a camp.**
- 2 - The small pillars.**
- 3 - The fruitless search for a Ligurian necropolis.**
- 4 - The remains of a large building on Poggio Castelluccio (site D/6).**

Before describing our explorations on the slopes of the Mugello valley, we would like to mention a number of finds that are difficult to interpret and remain shrouded in mystery.

The theories we have formulated about these finds are based on the other Roman and pre-Roman remains unearthed nearby and illustrated earlier. Excavation work well beyond our means would have been necessary to provide a more certain interpretation. Nevertheless, we hope the basic information we offer will inspire interest and future explorations.

1 - An artificial reservoir on mount Poggiaccio and an area suitable for a camp (site C/1)

On the eastern slope of mount Poggiaccio, just below the peak, about 150 metres south of the Apennine pass (that is just a few tens of metres south of site C/1), in the middle of the dense beech wood, there is a perfectly circular clearing with a diameter of about 15 metres. The clearing looks like a shallow basin, where aquatic plants some 30-40 cm high grow in the summer; during the winter, the basin fills with water which lingers until late spring. Downhill it is clear to see that the water is contained by an artificial

embankment, which coasts the route of the Roman road. The intention of the builders was to create a reliable water reservoir, ready to be used simultaneously by a large number of people and animals, considering that at this altitude almost on top of the ridge, there are no important sources of water.

We first noticed the small reservoir at the beginning of spring when it appeared to be full of water. We returned many times because it lay along the route of the Roman road and in May, we noticed that the water had drained away leaving a clearing full of aquatic plants.

Convinced that the reservoir must once have been deeper, we decided to excavate the centre during the driest period of the year. We hoped to uncover finds on the bottom that would help us to date when it was first used. Unfortunately, although the test excavation was carried out in August when the basin was dry, at a depth of 30-40 cm, the pit filled with water and this prevented us from continuing any further. We realised that the basin was supplied by a small spring and not just by rainwater. Therefore, it guaranteed the Apennine pass an abundant reserve of water even in full summer, considering it had a capacity of some 250 cubic metres; this was an important certainty for anyone travelling along the road.



Mount Poggiaccio (site C/1): *the small artificial reservoir located just under the peak of mount Poggiaccio. During the winter, the water still reaches a modest level.*



Mount Poggiaccio (site C/1): *the water completely disappears during the summer months leaving room for marsh plants.*



Mount Poggiaccio (site C/1): *In August 1986, we carried out a test excavation in the middle of the ancient, semi artificial reservoir but water seepage forced us to abandon the task. At work from left: Andrea Fanti, Francesco Ferrari, Franco Santi (inside the excavation hole) and Alberto Bargiotti.*



Mount Poggiaccio (site C/1): *a vast flat plain (unique to the area) next to the Roman road and the artificial reservoir may indicate that this was a stopover and campsite for military garrisons in transit.*

Such a large water reservoir could only be justified by the need to supply water to a large number of people or animals, for instance a large settlement or an army on the move.

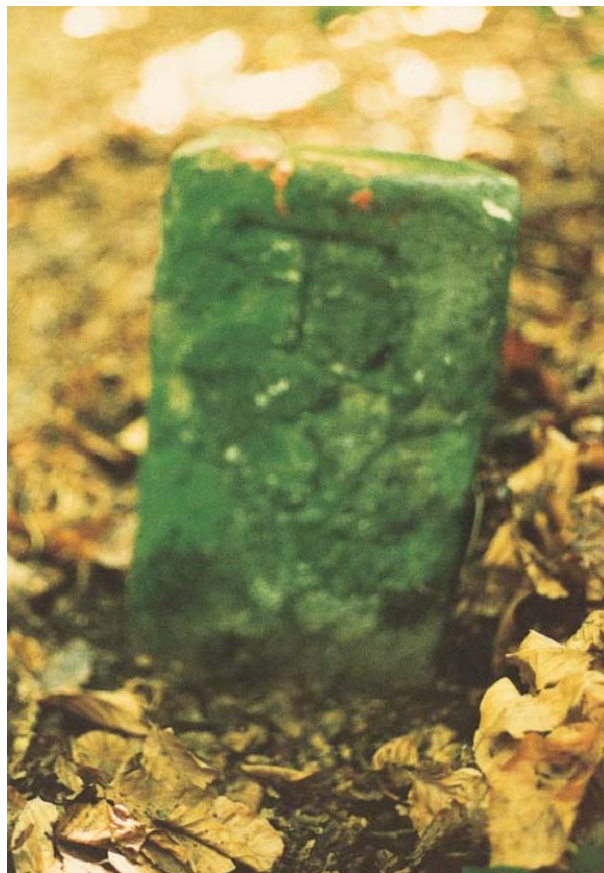
Immediately downhill of the basin, the gradient softens to the point that it almost becomes flat over a large area. On reaching this area, just 200 metres from the pass, one feels obliged to stop for a while in the ample grassy shade of the tall beech trees.

The specific environmental configuration of this plain, separated from the artificial reservoir by the road, gave us the impression that perhaps it was used as a stopping area where a camp could be pitched. Its dominant position offered a sufficient guarantee of safety, and it could have been a stopping area for military garrisons. Furthermore, it is about the same distance from Fiesole and Bologna, and nothing would be more logical than choosing it as an intermediate stopover. A number of test excavations carried out on the plain revealed that below a 40-45 cm layer of humus, there was a ground level made up of numerous extremely compacted and small sandstone fragments, which formed a solid and rustic flooring.

But who built the small reservoir and who flattened out the ground to make it suitable for pitching a camp? Was it perhaps the resident Ligurians, or the Etruscans who assiduously used this mountain pass, or the Romans to guarantee a comfortable overnight rest for their legions? These are no more than theories supported by the nearby presence of certain Ligurian and Roman remains, and which require archaeological verification.

2 - The small pillars.

During the first years of our explorations, next to the road at the foot of Poggiaccio and Poggio Castelluccio, we found three small sandstone pillars with a rectangular section, partially submerged in the topsoil. They were spaced about 200 metres away from each other. The sides of each differed in size but they were all sculpted with a letter "T" followed by a triangular full stop and a straight line was sculpted



Monte Poggiaccio and Poggio Castelluccio: *the three small sandstone pillars on the side of the road, spaced about 200 metres away from each other with the mysterious letter "T" sculpted on their side*





across the top. At first, we thought they were boundary stones defining Tuscan territory (T = Tuscia); then we noticed they followed the road route from north to south, while the borderline between Emilia and Tuscany runs in an east-west direction. We thought there was a strict correlation between these sandstone pillars and the transapennine road.

Our research into Latin epigraphy led us to suppose that these could be *Tabellae*, pillars the Romans placed at intervals between *miliari*.¹ An inscription on the base of a statue called the *miliarium Popillianum* mentions *Tabellae*; the epigraph also mentions the construction of the road from Reggio Calabria to Capua with these words in the first person: “I travelled the road from Reggio to Capua and along the route I installed every bridge, milestone and tabular... (ceteris omissis)”². Therefore, *Tabellari* or *Tabellae* were already being placed along Roman roads during the Republican age; the T sculpted on the pillars next to our road could have been an abbreviation for the word *Tabellarius* - *Tabella*.

We did not think they could be boundary stones because the border between Tuscany and Emilia is five kilometres further north (as it was during the past centuries), where it is still

possible to find cylindrical boundary stones bearing the date 1789, aligned from east to west. All these elements convinced us that these stones were Roman, and this is what we expressed in our first publication³.

These days we are no longer so convinced of this idea, especially because (following information provided by our friend, Carlo Alvisi), we have realised that there are another two pillars with the same characteristics on the ridge of mount Gazzaro, also part of the great Apennine range. However, mount Gazzaro is located about 3 km further east of the Futa pass and therefore completely removed from the road route. Furthermore, the east-west direction of the ridge – and therefore of the two pillars – is compatible with the theory that they are Tuscan-Emilian boundary stones, used in very remote times, when the boundary was located along this ridge.

These observations have inspired the theory that they are boundary stones dating back to the 6th - 8th century A.D. when the Lombards and the Byzantines faced each other on



This inscription was probably part of the base of a statue. It is called the “*Miliarium Popillianum*” because Mommsen attributed it to P. Popillius Laenas, consul in 132 B.C. It mentions the construction of the road from Reggio Calabria to Capua and the installation of the relative *miliari* and *tabellari*.

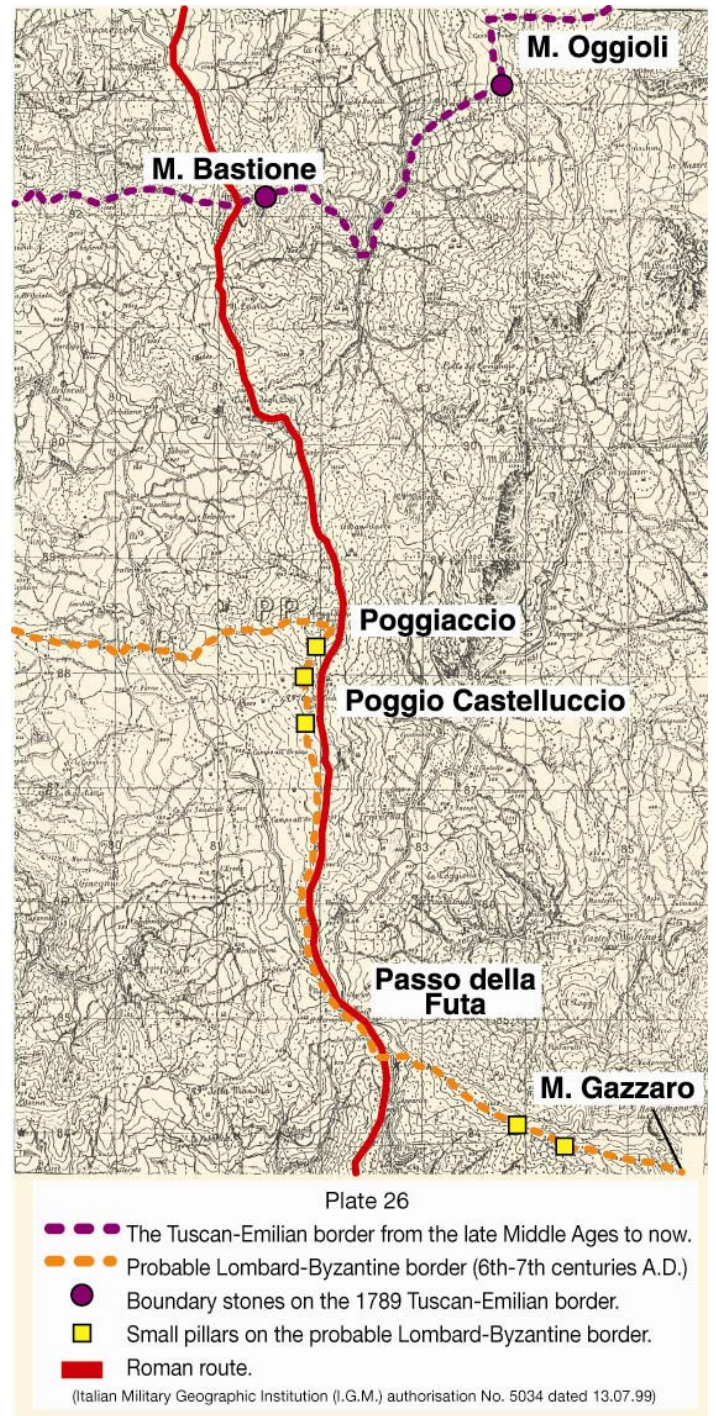
¹ Ida Calabi Limentani: “Epigrafia latina” published by Cisalpina Goliardica, 1967, page 285: “Milestones were located along roads at every thousand paces; we do not know with what regularity minor distances between them were signposted (by *Tabellae*)”.

² Mommsen attributes this epigraph to P. Popillius Laenas, consul in 132 B.C.

³ C. Agostini - V. Di Cesare - F. Santi: “La strada Flaminia Militare” Published by Costa in 1989, pages 47 and 48.



M. Gazzaro (1,125 metres above sea level): two sandstone pillars on the slopes of mount Gazzaro, about 3 km east of the Futa pass, on the great Tuscan-Emilian Apennine range. They have the same parallelepiped shape and letter “T” sculpted on the side as the ones on mount Poggiaccio and Poggio Castelluccio.



these Apennine passes. In this case, the “T” should stand for “Tuscia”, as Tuscany was called during the Lombard age. And although the three small pillars on the side of the road in Poggio Castelluccio and Poggiaccio are aligned from north to south, they may have indicated a point where Lombard dominion penetrated the Byzantine border to control the Poggiaccio pass.

This theory is supported by the fact that a number of cylindrical boundary stones, installed in 1789 outlining the border between the Papal States



Mount Oggioli (west versant): one of the cylindrical pillars made of sandstone used to mark the boundary between the Papal States and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. They were located along the mount Bastione and mount Oggioli axis. It is clear to see the sculpted letters "SS" and the date, 1789.



Mount Oggioli (west versant): the rear of the cylindrical pillar where it is clear to see the sculpted letter "T" and the letters "NA", probably an abbreviation for Tuscany.

and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, feature the letters SS and the date 1789 on the Bolognese side, and the letters "T" and "NA", an abbreviation for Tuscany, on the other side.

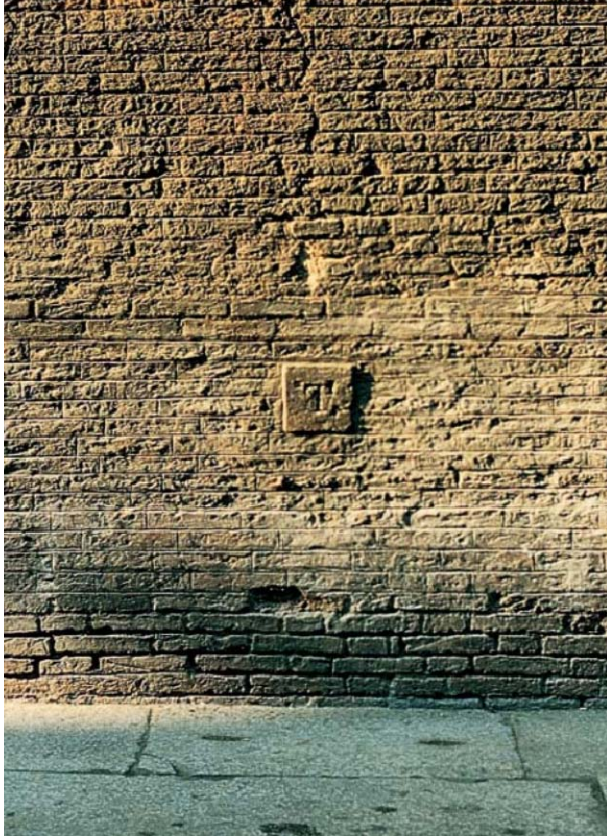
If this is the case, these two types of pillars, about 5 kilometres apart, are boundary stones that refer to two different epochs: the older, located further south, belong to the Lombard-Byzantine age, when the boundary was on the Futa pass-mount Gazzaro axis (with a penetration point that reached as far as Poggiasco); the more recent pillars, located five kilometres further north, belong to the Grand Duchy-Papal States age, along the mount Bastione-mount Oggioli axis where the boundary between Tuscany and Emilia is located.

However, doubts regarding the dating and the function of these small pillars remain, especially after we were told that on the lower part of the massive external walls of a 16th century palazzo located at number 1

Via Rolandino in Bologna ⁴, among the terracotta bricks on the side of the building overlooking Via De' Poeti, there is a 20 by 20 cm square sandstone block with a letter "T" sculpted at its centre. The character is the same as the one on the boundary stones and it features the same triangular full stop next to the foot of the "T".

Bearing in mind the construction era, it is presumable that this small square stone was used in 1500. But what significance can be attributed to a solitary letter sculpted on a stone in the wall of a building with no other inscription? Furthermore, what type of connection can this stone have with the small pillars on the Tuscany-Emilia Apennine border? Our doubts remain and we leave them to those who in future may want to solve these mysteries.

⁴ The building is called the Berò or Carracci house, later the Gradi house. We would like to thank Daniele Moretto for the information and the photograph he sent us.



Palazzo at number 1 Via Rolandino in Bologna: *the solitary sandstone block set in the base of the external wall facing Via De' Poeti on the 16th century palazzo located at number 1 Via Rolandino in Bologna. The letter "T" sculpted at the centre of the stone is very similar to the letter sculpted on the small pillars found on the Tuscany-Emilia Apennine pass* (Photograph by Daniele Moretto).

3 - The fruitless search for a Ligurian necropolis.

We spent many years exploring the slopes and summit of Poggio Castelluccio.

The finds uncovered induced us to extend our search to the surrounding areas to see if there were other examples of Roman and pre-Roman remains. We also wanted to find a Ligurian necropolis, convinced that one must exist given the centuries-old presence of Ligurian settlements in the area.

We dedicated considerable time to this investigation; we also used a metal detector, which proved to be counter-productive. The entire area is scattered with residues of the last world war (shards from shells, cartridge cases, wire, empty cans, etc.) now covered by two or three centimetres of humus, which were picked up by the metal detector and consequently misled our explorations and caused a great loss of time. Therefore, we had to resort to a

visual search of the surface in spite of the fact there was no hope of seeing any burial monuments because they were not used by the Ligurians.

Thus, in spite of our efforts, we did not locate the necropolis. Neither could we expect to find any Roman burials; it is very unlikely that the Romans established a settlement of any importance that involved the burial of the dead near an Apennine pass and at such an altitude. If any Romans unexpectedly died here, they were probably taken to burial grounds elsewhere in the cities.

4 - The remains of a large building on Poggio Castelluccio (site D/6):

Poggio Castelluccio offers an ideal panorama overlooking many kilometres of the road coming from the Mugello valley and heading towards Bologna, therefore, we thought the Romans had probably set up a stable military garrison here to control the area (at least during the first years after their conquest).

Therefore, we concentrated our efforts on finding the remains of a building, convinced that it would have been easier to make out the remains of a ruin rather than finding a necropolis.

However, our numerous explorations were fruitless until 1991.

In August of that year, we were working with a number of friends on Poggio Castelluccio to uncover further metres of the paved road. After our usual packed lunch, we had a break and wandered around the nearby surroundings. It was while doing this that we noticed a rectangular clearing where the beech trees did not grow.

The usual ferns did not grow in the clearing although it was a sunny spot. The ground appeared to be slightly raised around the perimeter compared to the surrounding area. When we noticed the perfect geometric alignment of the four sides of a rectangle, we realised we were looking at the remains of the perimeter walls of a building.

We started to excavate and at a depth of just 25-30 cm, unearthed an 80 cm wide wall, constructed with hewn sandstone blocks. Anxious to discover

the dimensions of the building, we localised the four corners and confirmed its (approximately) 14 x 10 metre rectangular shape. Given the dimensions, this must have been an important building, considering the distance from other settlements and its 1,100-metre altitude above sea level. Its position also suggested it was closely related to the summit of Poggio Castelluccio, and the nearby road. In fact, it lay within the angle formed by the main ridge (facing north-south) along which the Roman road passed and by the short ridge connecting to the peak of Poggio Castelluccio. Constructed just below the top of these two ridges, the building nestled in a hollow where it was protected from the wind and had comfortable access to the road just 70 metres away. Its closeness to the Roman road suggests that it may have been used as a place to stop for the night and where messengers and their horses could get refreshment.

After allowing our imagination to wander through these suggestive conjectures, we soon faced up to the archaeological reality before us. Large-scale excavations were required before we could establish with any certainty when the building was built, and its foundations had yet to be uncovered. While waiting to organise an excavation campaign, we continued to investigate the surroundings searching for a waste site and a water supply. We did not find the former; however about 80-90 cm west of the building we found a spring which even today in full summer still has a water flow rate capable of meeting the daily demands of a number of people and as many horses. The presence of a water supply confirmed the possibility that this building could have been lived in on a permanent basis.

In February 1992, we invited the architect, Franco Bergonzoni ⁵ to the location, hoping he would provide an initial opinion



Poggio Castelluccio (site D/6 – February 1992): *the inspection by Franco Bergonzoni (right) in the area where it was possible to discern the walls of a building; Carlo Alvisi (left) and Franco Santi (with his back to the camera) were also there.*

⁵ See the note in Chapter VIII, paragraph 5.

regarding the geometric shape of the foundations. He very kindly accepted our invitation and carried out a summary review of the perimeter walls, using the four unearthed corners as a reference and drawing up the plan we have enclosed herein (document 11).



Poggio Castelluccio (site D/6 – February 1992): *another moment during the survey made by Franco Bergonzoni: in the foreground the north-west corner of the still completely submerged building.*

The two longest sides of the rectangular building measured 14 metres and the shortest 10.10 and 10.40 metres respectively⁶; we noticed that these measurements are compatible with other Roman buildings and corresponded respectively to 47 feet on the longest sides (14 metres), 34 feet on one of the shortest sides (10.10 metres) and 35 feet on the other side (10.40 metres)⁷. Inside the perimeter walls, it was possible to make out the presence of two dividing walls, constructed perpendicularly and at the same distance from the longest walls and which appeared to form a long central corridor. However, given the scant remains, Bergonzoni did not express an opinion regarding the probable age of the building and deferred any decision until all the masonry remains had been uncovered as far as floor level.

Therefore, to uncover more information, we asked the Archaeological Superintendency for Tuscany for authorisation to carry out an extensive dig over the entire surface of the building helped by numerous volunteers and friends. We were granted authorisation but we only had three working days to excavate given the limited time available to Luca Fedeli, who had to direct and control the work. The excavation was carried out on 12, 13 and 14 September 1992. We started on the northeast side of the building with the aim of uncovering the wall facing the road where the entrance door was probably located. During the three days, we managed to uncover the two entrance doorjambs and the entire side wall as far as the northeast corner of the building for a length of 3.60 metres; we also uncovered a further 2 metres of the perimeter wall starting from this corner and which faces west.

We had to remove many stones from the collapsed perimeter walls (which had fallen inwards) to reach the floor level, located at a depth of 90 cm below the upper level of the wall. Numerous iron nails were found on the sandstone floor (they were obviously

⁶ The slight 30 cm difference between the two shorter sides is a consequence of ground subsidence.

⁷ A Roman foot measured 29.7 cm. Therefore, when the measurements of the sides of the rectangle are compared to the Roman foot, the following result is obtained: 29.7 cm x 47 = 13.96 m; 29.7 cm x 34 = 10.098 m.

made long ago) and a few fragments of medieval ceramics. The doorjambs are 2.80 metres away from each other, proving that the door was very wide; we did not find the lintel, which would have provided us with important information.

Overall, the excavation covered a total area of 12 square metres; very little compared to the total surface of the building which measures 143 square metres. This was also due to the obstacle posed by numerous beech trees, which had grown on top of the perimeter wall and in the empty space between the two entrance doorjambs.

A small excavation carried out below the floor near the south jamb revealed some fragments of Apennine-Ligurian ceramics made from the same clay and the same colour as the ones found in abundance on the summit of Poggio Castelluccio.

In conclusion, the three days of excavation did not provide sufficient evidence to establish when the building was constructed, nor



Poggio Castelluccio (site D/6): the doorjamb and the east perimeter wall of the building.

what it was originally used for. The only significant architectural information was the 2.80 metre wide entrance door; if it had been the entrance to a stable, which probably occupied the ground floor, it was presumably used for horses because it was wide enough to allow access to a pair of horses; stables for cattle (and more so for sheep) have always had (and still have in mountain regions) much narrower entrances.



Poggio Castelluccio (site D/6 – September 1992): the northeast side of the building where the excavations took place. From left, Fabiola Martin (her back to the camera), Luca Fedeli (sitting), Antonella Marchini, Francesco Ferrari (standing with his back to the camera), Franco Santi (sitting) and Cesare Agostini (bending over with his back to the camera), Franco Bacci and Andrea Agostini.

The numerous nails found indicate that the area above the first floor (made of masonry), was made of wood. Indirect confirmation of this theory comes from the fact that there was not enough stone from the collapsed walls to justify a two storey building.

Unfortunately, after 1992 the Superintendency did not authorise any further excavations and the remains of the building are still 90% buried; therefore all the enigmas we encountered when we found the remains have yet to be solved.

We also leave this testimony of a remote past to those who have the determination and strength to complete the excavation. Perhaps they will be able to unveil the mystery surrounding when the construction was built and its original use.

For the time being, we shall limit ourselves to making a few considerations.

We do not think this building was constructed for agricultural use: nor as a farmhouse, stable or barn. Its position on top of the ridge justifies our opinion; no farmer would have built his home or stable in such an isolated and unpractical position

which would have first forced him to carry the building materials uphill and then all the wood and other products necessary to survive. Furthermore, snow lingers longer at high altitudes, increasing hardship.

However, it cannot be excluded that during subsequent ages, when the circumstances that motivated its construction ceased to exist, the building was re-employed for other uses, including farming, thus changing its original use⁸.

Its construction probably dates back to when the paved road was still in use and perfectly maintained. In fact, if it had been constructed during subsequent centuries, when the paved road was no longer used, the builders would have removed the hewn and readily available paving stones from the road and used them to construct the building. Instead, the nearby paving is still intact. On the other hand, if the building dated back to more recent times, when the paving had already been covered by sedimentation (and therefore hidden from predators) the memory of its existence would have been handed down to us as was the case of Stale, Passeggere and Faggeta.

⁸ Stefano Casini: "Dizionario geografico, storico del Comune di Firenzuola", page 89: *"In 1292, the men from Castro and Montale, whose earnings especially came from their herds, rented the woods and meadows of Badia dello Stale and extended their territory beyond the very ancient road which ascended from Gagliano, and crossed the mountain and probably descended along the ancient Via Cassia to Baragazza and Bologna"*.

This historic testimony by Casini confirms that the building may have been rebuilt and reused at the end of the 13th century as a stable for cattle and sheep.